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AUTHOR Ellis, Patricia Ann
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INSTITUTION Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, Los Alamitos, Calif.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the unaided teacher is able to teach kindergarten children in remedial reading as well as the teacher who is aided by trained fifth- and sixth-grade tutors. Involved in the study were eight schools using the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) First Year Communications Skills Program, which is designed to teach basic reading skills to kindergarten children. In four of these schools, teachers were told only to use the remedial practice exercises when indicated, while in the other four schools, a systematic method of remediation was administered by teachers and trained student tutors. When all tutoring was completed, a retest of the criterion exercise was given to a random sample of four kindergarten students in each classroom. Results showed that the greatest gains were made by the teacher-plus-tutor children, with 51 percent reading the 80 percent level on the retest, while in the teacher-only group, 20 percent of the children reached the 80 percent level on the retest. (JM)

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REMEDIAL READING INSTRUCTION: TEACHERS AIDED BY STUDENT TUTORS vs. UNAIDED TEACHERS[1]

Patricia Ann Ellis

Can the unaided teacher instruct kindergarten children in remedial reading as well as the teacher who is aided by trained fifth- and sixth-grade tutors? This question is now being investigated by the Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (SWRL).

MATERIALS

SWRL READING PROGRAM

SWRL's First-Year Communications Skills Program is designed to teach kindergarten children basic reading skills. Specifically, students who

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master the course will be able to: (1) read the words (approximately 90) taught directly in the program; (2) sound out and read non-program words composed of sounds taught in the program; and (3) demonstrate comprehension of what is read in the program. The course is organized into 10 Units, each requiring about three weeks of teaching time. Each Unit has four specific Program Outcomes. They are: (1) words that the children learn to read, (2) initial sounds, (3) ending sounds, and (4) blending skills. For example, the child is taught an initial sound, m (which is sounded out as mmmmm) and an ending sound, at. He then blends the two sounds together, mmm-at, to make the word mat. Once the teacher has adequately given instruction on a particular Unit, a Criterion Exercise is administered. This test consists of 20 items: 5 items on each of the 4 outcomes. On each item the child must select the correct word, initial sound, ending sound, or blend from three possible choices.

METHODS

REMEDIAL MATERIALS

Each child is expected to achieve a score of 16 (80%) or higher on each Criterion Exercise. Since not all of the participating children reach the 80% criterion level, remedial materials called Practice Exercises are distributed to all teachers (see Figure 1). A Practice Exercise consists of 20 items, which may call for either selected or constructed responses. On the side of the Practice Exercise is a script to be read by the teacher. Two different Practice Exercises are provided for each Outcome of each Unit.

Figure 1

Typical Page from a 5 Page Practice Exercise

Used by Tutors with Kindergarten Pupils

PRACTICE EXERCISE 1a UNIT 6		
Row 1 Point to the word fun	1	fun sun feet
Row 2 Put your finger under the word fun	2	sun ran run
Row 3 Read this word	3	Sun
Row 4 Read this word	4	Run

SUBJECTS

Eight schools in Torrance are currently using the Communications Skills Program. In four of these schools the teachers were simply told to use the remedial Practice Exercises when indicated. In the other four schools, however, a systematic method of remediation is being administered by both teachers and trained student tutors. In these eight tutorial classrooms, fifth and sixth grade student tutors monitor the kindergarteners on a one-to-one basis, using the Practice Exercises. The remedial goal is to bring the sub-criterion students up to the 80% standard.

TUTOR TRAINING

At the beginning of the school year, the student tutors went through a 5-day (45 minutes per day) training program which sought to establish the following tutor behaviors:

1. Tutor engages pupil in noninstructional, friendly conversation.
2. Tutor verbally confirms correct pupil responses.
3. Tutor praises the pupil.
4. Tutor tells or shows the pupil the correct response when the pupil is incorrect.
5. Tutor, after displaying behavior 4, then elicits correct response from pupil before going on.
6. Tutor, following nonresponse to his initial question or direction, repeats it in different words.
7. Tutor avoids attempting to elicit correct response by prompting.

ASSIGNMENT OF TUTORS

Once the tutors were trained, the kindergarten teachers (who had also done the training) assigned them to work with those kindergarteners needing remedial help. Help was given according to the following rules: if the kindergartener obtained a score of 5 on any Outcome, he obviously needed no additional help on that Outcome. A score of 4 or 3 usually meant he would be tutored with one Practice Exercise. A score of 2, 1 or 0 meant he would receive both Practice Exercises.

CLASSROOM TUTORING PROCEDURES

In a typical Unit, the following sequence is usually followed. The teacher, having completed instruction on a particular Unit, administers a Criterion Exercise to the entire class. Scores are obtained and marked on a Class Record Sheet (see Figure 2). The Class Record Sheet shows where each student needs remediation on each Unit Outcome. The remedial needs of each child are then marked on individual cards, showing which Practice Exercise each student is to receive. The teacher assigns tutors to individual students. At each session, the tutor works with one child on one Practice Exercise. The tutor merely reads the script, and replies to the kindergartener's responses according to the general tutor behaviors he has learned. After completing the Practice Exercise, the tutor may be assigned to monitor the reading of a storybook by his student, or he may take the kindergartener to play. Once the kindergartener has been tutored, the tutor marks off the Practice Exercise number on the record card, ensuring that no double tutoring sessions occur.

Figure 2

CLASS RECORD SHEET

TEACHER Stephens, Elaine

SCHOOL Washington

STUDENT NAME	NUMBER CORRECT FOR EACH OUTCOME				
	OUTCOME 1 WORDS	OUTCOME 2 INITIAL SOUNDS	OUTCOME 3 ENDING SOUNDS	OUTCOME 4 BLENDS	TOTAL CORRECT
1. Joni	4	5	5	4	18
2. Victoria	3	4	5	3	15
3. Shelia	4	5	5	5	19
4. Dawn	5	3	1	4	13
5. Deborah	5	5	5	5	20
6. Christie	4	3	4	5	16
7. Melinda	2	5	4	1	12
8. Amy	5	5	5	5	20
9. Liza	5	5	5	4	19
10. Terrie	3	3	2	3	11
11. Scott	5	5	5	4	19
12. Kenneth	4	5	5	4	18
13. Philip	5	5	5	4	19
14. Daniel	4	5	5	5	19
15.					

MEASURES

When all tutoring has been completed (which usually takes 2 or 3 weeks), a re-test of the Criterion Exercise is given to a random sample of four kindergarten students in each classroom. This method is also used to re-test pupils in the teacher-monitored remediation group. The same Criterion Exercise is used in the re-test as in the original Criterion Exercise test.

RESULTS

Figure 3 shows the means and gain scores of the two remediation groups, teacher-only and teacher-plus-tutor. Scores are presented in three categories based on scores attained on the initial Criterion Exercise. The categories are 0-5, 6-10, and 11-15. Students whose initial scores were in the 0 to 10 range made comparable gains. However, the greatest gains were made by the teacher-plus-tutor children whose initial scores fell between 11 and 15. Of this group, 21 out of 41 (51%) came up to the 80% level on the re-test, while in the teacher-only group, a mere 6 out of 30 (20%) came up to the 80% level.

The re-test scores of all students whose initial scores fell from 0 through 15 were subjected to a t-test which proved significant ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Student tutors can be used successfully to monitor a remedial program if the materials used are highly structured and are tied directly to specified pupil behaviors. Also, student tutors have proved very helpful to those kindergarteners whose scores fall in the 11-15 range

Figure 3

Test-Re-test Gain Scores Following Teacher-Only Remediation and Teacher-Plus-Tutor Remediation

Initial Score Category	Teacher-Only Remediation				Teacher-Plus-Tutor Remediation			
	Number of Pupils	Mean Initial Score	Mean Re-test Score	Gain	Number of Pupils	Mean Initial Score	Mean Re-test Score	Gain
0-5	1	3.00	4.00	+1.00	2	4.00	10.00	+6.00
6-10	8	8.50	10.63	+2.13	14	8.50	11.00	+2.50
11-15	30	13.23	13.20	-0.03	41	13.46	15.39	+1.93
All Remedial Pupils	39	12.00	12.44	+0.44	57	11.91	14.12	+2.21

on the initial Criterion Exercise. It was discovered that when a student's initial score was in the 0-10 range the teacher would initiate remedial help regardless of whether trained tutors were available.

All other factors being equal, use of trained student tutors will increase the number of students who achieve mastery.